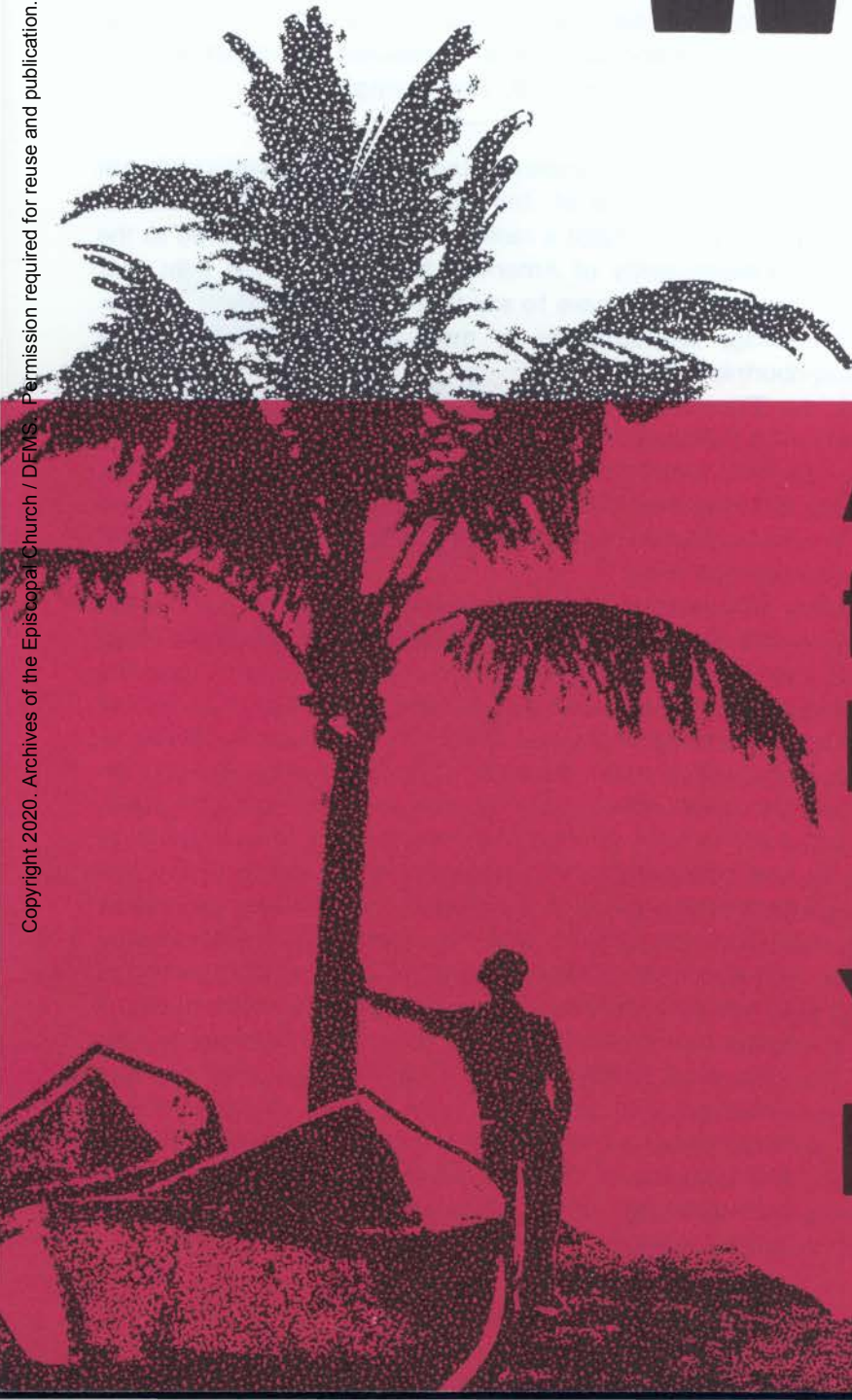


LIBRARY & ARCHIVES  
CHURCH HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
AUSTIN, TEXAS

# THE WITNESS

December 8, 1974  
Volume 58, Number 4



## A Quest for the Kingdom

J. Antonio Ramos

## Your Time Is Up!

Henry Rightor

# Letters to the Editor

*The Witness* reserves the right to condense all letters.

I found the lead article in the October 13 issue of *The Witness* most inappropriate for a Church publication. In "The New Sexuality: Liberation or Flight?" the author not only condones sexual behavior that, judged by Holy Scripture and the Prayer Book Service of Holy Matrimony, is immoral but actually recommends it, as a means to strengthen a monogamous marriage.

To call such behavior acceptable as "the new morality" is to deny that there is any such thing as fornication and adultery. Premarital coupling and "swinging" fit respectively under those two headings and for a Church paper to publish an endorsement of such practices is a betrayal of what the Church stands for in the area of sexual morality.—Henry N. Herndon, Wilmington

Gibson Winter seemed to be contradicting himself in his article. At one point he says the new sexuality of people living together prior to legal bondage, and men-women equality is great; yet at the end of his article he claims we're in trouble because this "new sexuality" is "a flight from freedom and justice — away from a human future.

Aside from this point, I do give him three cheers for stating his opinion that "pre-marital coupling" can be seen as an advantage. However, I don't believe that the guilt felt in the 50s for such an action is completely gone today. Although there's the "pill", voices of incriminating parents can still be heard saying, "Thou shalt not fool around."

There might be a lot of good marriages around, as Mr. Winter states, but my generation is constantly hearing the bad side — the divorce scene. Therefore, given my feelings and the feedback I get from my friends, I can't help agreeing with Gibson Winter and his pros for pre-marital coupling. So often parents think of this as just sex, sex, sex. This aggravates me. The term "living together" is simply that — not only sex, but two people sharing their lives together without a piece of paper, because they believe they have a mutually affectionate relationship.—Maryanne Momorella, Willow Grove, Pa. (Age 22)

I am a bit concerned over your reference to the kind of thing which you are trying to do with *The Witness*.

Please, please, please do not turn it into just one more mag with an axe to grind!

I have felt very strongly that we need a publication from the liberal point of view. On the other hand, I have felt just as strongly that a truly liberal publication should be a well-rounded one.

It is just that while we do need critical articles, we also need to keep our eye on the ball. Not all of Christ's teachings were polemics against the Pharisees!

We have heard so much about G.C.S.P., Prayer Book revision, women's ordination, etc., etc., and so little about the basic reasons for whatever may be our attitudes towards them.

Do remember, that most lay people look upon our intramural squabbles with a somewhat jaundiced eye."—George Wickersham, II, Hot Springs, Va.

It might seem to some reading Jesse Christman's article in the 11/17 issue of *The Witness* that he is at least a pessimist, at most a radical. Having been involved in the in-depth study of American business for the past four years, I would have to say that Jesse is a realist. If anything, the situation is more frightening than Jesse portrays it.

Two things not mentioned by Jesse are important as they relate to this subject of corporate responsibility. The first is symbolic and the second very real. The elevation of Nelson Rockefeller to the office of vice-president symbolically completes the circle between government and business.

The second and more important issue is our current economic situation. In part caused by the short-range profit-oriented thinking of business, inflation is now the banner being waved by businessmen as they call for the dismantling of the last thirty years of social progress — little as it was. Because of inflation the carefully orchestrated chorus calls for more corporate tax exemption, overthrow of all environmental laws, the weakening (if that's possible) of all government regulatory agencies, and new trade policies all designed to fatten corporate profits.

Christman states that the "corporate social responsibility movement is positioned at a crucial intersection of corporate capitalism." I would agree. He then places a heavy burden on those who will understand the failure. They must clearly "explain it" and "struggle for" the new and more just economic system. That struggle should begin now, and the church should be at its forefront for it is the degree of moral sensitivity within society that will formulate the value structures of the next economic system.—Frank White, New York City



# THE WITNESS

Robert L. DeWitt, Editor; Robert Eckersley, John F. Stevens, Lisa K. Whelan, Hugh C. White, Jr., Antoinette Swanger. Editorial and Business Office: P.O. Box 359, Ambler, Pennsylvania 19002, Telephone (215) 643-7067. Subscription Rates: \$7.20 per year; \$.60 per copy. The Witness is published eighteen times annually: October 13, 27; November 24; December 8, 29; January 12; February 2, 16; March 9, 23; April 13, 27; May 18; June 1, 22; July 13; September 7, 21 by The Episcopal Church Publishing Company. Board of Directors: Bishops Morris Arnold, Robert DeWitt, Lloyd Gressle, John Hines, John Krumm, Brooke Mosley and Dr. Joseph Fletcher. Copyright 1974 by the Episcopal Church Publishing Company.

## The Weightier Matters

by Robert L. DeWitt

The recent refusal by the Presiding Bishop to accept a contribution for the relief of world hunger and suffering dramatizes a tragic circumstance in the life of our Church.

At the much-publicized Eucharist at Riverside Church in New York City on October 27 which three women priests concelebrated, the offering was designated for the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief. Last July the Roman Catholic Cardinal Cooke, out of concern for the famine-stricken people of the world, issued a pastoral letter to his constituents calling for the observance of meatless Wednesdays. Early in November the Episcopal Bishop Moore sent a similar pastoral to his people.

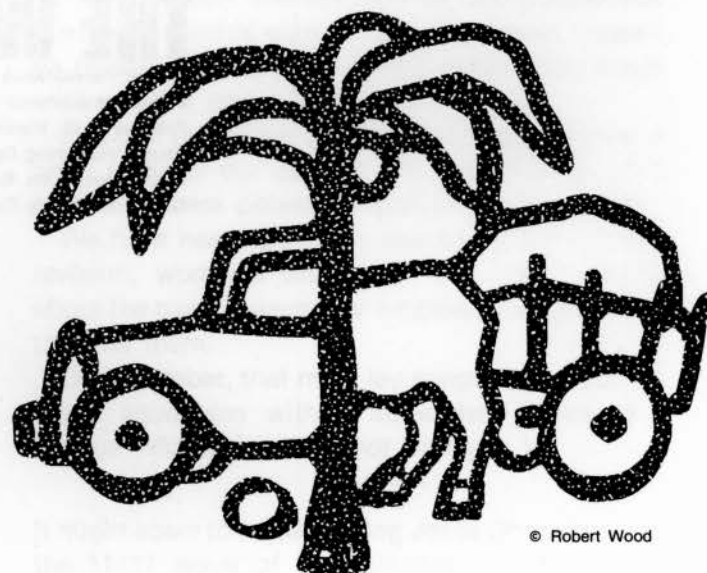
There is a striking contrast between the reason for the New York prelates' requests of their people, and the reason for the Presiding Bishop's rejection of the offering. The contrast identifies a sobering reality in the life of the Church. Bishop Moore referred to the present world famine as "not 'just another catastrophe,' but a major tragedy of history." The current unfolding of the facts about world hunger underscores the accuracy of his statement. The Presiding Bishop, on the other hand, turned down a modest contribution for the relief of that very tragedy "as a matter of conscience." The probable, though unspoken, reason was his concern lest his acceptance of the gift be interpreted as tacit approval of the service of thanksgiving from which the offering came.

Even though the world food crisis is a major concern of the Presiding Bishop he must nevertheless be wary of prematurely or implicitly recognizing the ordination of the women priests. He is caught in a dilemma, victim of an incongruity in the life of the Church.

Because he is the Presiding Bishop, a point of procedure must take precedence over purpose. A molehill of scrupulosity must be allowed to overshadow a mountain of mission. It is expected. Yet, this reversal of priorities is a scandal to many outside the church, as well as to growing numbers within the church.

# A Quest for the Kingdom

by J. Antonio Ramos



© Robert Wood

The Editors of *The Witness* have asked me to write an article reflecting upon those issues of our society and of the Christian community which have influenced my ministry as a priest and bishop of the Episcopal Church.

We live in an age of oppressors and oppressed, both of whom are in slavery, chained and in bonds by virtue of those very conditions. However, the shameful fact about all of this — something which we, as a Christian world body, have not yet been able to see and understand — is that we, the so-called disciples of that freeing and liberating Lord, are the ones who perpetuate this state of sin. We, brothers and sisters in the Faith, continue to keep each other in a state of slavery and oppression throughout the world. For the Christian Church, spread throughout the entire globe, in the six continents, has in its body, the Body of Christ, both members who are oppressors and oppressed, rich and poor, well-fed and starving, clothed and naked, sheltered and roofless. This is our modern tragedy, our sin, our shame, our challenge for the years to come.

It is within this understanding of what our present world demands of the Christian community that I see my ministry as a bishop of the Episcopal Church, as a Christian, and as a citizen of the world. I am committed to the cause of liberation, understood in biblical terms, the cause of liberation of both society and the Church. Perhaps a brief look at some of the experiences I have had may tell something about why I stand where I stand today.

I was born in 1937 in a small rural community in the mountain area of Puerto Rico: a twin in a family of 18. At

that time Puerto Rico was a rural and agricultural society. It was a time of large families which constituted an economic productive unit, with the head of the household proud of such a proliferous gift. My father was quite prosperous, owning a coffee farm, a grocery store and a bakery, of which he was the baker and we were his assistants. My mother ran the grocery store, and all of us learned from our very early years to provide the necessary labor. We went to the farm when we were not in school, and, at the time of the crop, all of us, boys and girls, had to miss school to join in the gathering of the coffee crop. In the afternoons we helped with the preparation of the dough for the bread, taking turns during the week to get up daily at 3 a.m. for the baking. Early in the morning, one or two of us went on horseback to deliver the bread to many near and distant places. At home, washing of clothes and bathing had to be done in the river, with rain water gathered in containers for cooking. Cooking was done with vegetable charwood. On many occasions we had to study under the light of a candlestick.

Soon the depression and the Second World War began to hit us hard and we began to learn what it was to walk barefoot and what real fasting and abstinence meant all year round. The rural exodus to the city and the emigration by thousands of Puerto Ricans as cheap labor to the United States made things worse. Right now, we only own a small piece of land where my father lives alone, in the wooden house where my twin brother, a younger one and I were born.

All of us were baptized, raised and nurtured in the local

Episcopal Church. It was very near our home, at a time when most of the work of our Church in Puerto Rico was in the rural areas, a sector of Puerto Rico's society largely neglected by the predominant Roman Catholic Church. From my infant years, I was a devoted and faithful member of that very small church, the center of the community's life. At the age of 15 I was admitted as a candidate for postulancy by the then Bishop of Puerto Rico, the Rt. Rev. Albert Ervine Swift, my second father, a loving, caring person, who gave all his efforts in providing Puerto Rico with an indigenous leadership and a native bishop. I became a deacon in 1962, having graduated from Ripon College in Wisconsin in 1959 and later from the Episcopal Theological School.

In June 1962, I joined the staff of the Cathedral in San Juan, as a Curate of the then Dean of the Cathedral, The Rt. Rev. Francisco Reus-Froylan. I became the chaplain of the Cathedral School and of the University of Puerto Rico. As chaplain, I met a student of mine, a very shy and beautiful girl. We fell in love and she became my wife. Since then, Minerva has been the source of my strength and inspiration and has given me the courage to pursue this ministry up to this moment. Later, I became a canon of the Cathedral; in 1966 its dean and in October of 1968, at the age of 31, I was elected Bishop of the Church in Costa Rica, a country which I had visited only once. (In those days, missionary dioceses were not allowed to elect their own bishops, only to nominate.) To the Costa Rican Church I was an unknown figure, so that my election was somewhat contested by them; rightly so.

### **Toward Independence**

I am now in the sixth year of my episcopate and already looking forward to 1976 when the Costa Rican Episcopal Church will be able to exercise its own right to self-determination, by electing its own bishop. This will culminate a process of change begun before I came to Costa Rica: the establishment of the Episcopal Church in Costa Rica as a national Church, able to govern its own affairs. With the full support of the clergy and the laity of the diocese we have been able to establish local diocesan structures for self-government and self-support, and develop a sense of selfhood so necessary for any young church. Right now, we raise locally most of the budget for our programs. Thanks to capital funds which we were given by the Executive Council and the women of the Church, we have been able to produce locally the necessary resources for the support of our diocesan

structures and programs. This has been made possible also by our continued development of a self-supporting ministry and by the introduction of changes in our styles of ministry and mission. Each of us provides for his own housing, so that we are no longer dependent on the Church for this; nor do we receive the well-known fringe benefits. Each receives a straight salary, just like any other one in Costa Rican society. At least 40 percent of our budget goes to support programs dealing with hunger, poverty and the poor. By 1976, when I will resign as bishop, we hope to become an autonomous Church, free to govern its own affairs and capable of supporting most of its work.

### **A Maverick Bishop**

During these years I have participated also, with other Christians in our Latin American continent, in various efforts to focus the attention of the Christian community to the issues and problems which the Third World faces. These problems must be the concern also of the Christian community in the rich and developed nations, such as the United States, which also encounter the same issues and problems with the poor and oppressed, the Third World, in their own midst. It is no mere coincidence that in both situations, the ones who suffer exploitation and

---

Are we not called to follow the example of the Master of our lives? He stands for the poor, the sick, the lame, the imprisoned, the oppressed, the persecuted, and in His death and resurrection, makes us instruments of His liberating love.

---

oppression, poverty and hunger, are the non-Whites; and that those who enjoy prosperity and oppress are Whites.

I realize that because of my choice to stand with and for the oppressed, I am considered by many in my own Church and outside, a "radical," a "maverick Bishop." However, are we not called to follow the example of the Master of our lives? He stands for the poor, the sick, the lame, the imprisoned, the oppressed, the persecuted, and, in His death and resurrection, makes us instruments of His liberating love.

As I reflect upon my own life and ministry I realize that I have gone through a major metamorphosis in my view of things, in my thinking, in my concepts and attitudes. I can see now how the following experiences have turned me around from a defender of the status quo, to one



embracing the cause of liberation both in society and the Church.

- 1) My early youth, when I experienced what it was to be poor and lacking.
- 2) The summer I spent at the Ascension Church in Chicago, when I first had a close experience about, and felt the plight of, Puerto Ricans in the United States.
- 3) The summer which I spent in Kingsport, Tennessee, while a college student, at the invitation of the women of the Diocese of Tennessee whose "adopted son" I was at that time. There I lived with a family and worked daily at the local hospital as a janitor. That was the first time I earned a salary. My first traumatic experience took place when I went to a movie-theatre and was confronted with the dividing signs at the doors: BLACK this way, WHITE that way. Although I did not realize it at that time, that experience, together with others at the bus station and the bus itself, created a great turmoil inside me and the first signs of rebellion against the system.
- 4) At seminary, when I started dating a girl and was rejected by her parents because I was a Puerto Rican. It was at that time that I participated in a picket line for the first time, protesting discrimination at the Woolworth stores throughout the country.
- 5) At the Cathedral in San Juan, Puerto Rico, as a part of a pilot project which the diocese had started, when I initiated, with the assistance of US and PR volunteers, a summer project in one of the slums near-by. It was really then, when I had close contact with the urban poor, that I became sensitive about the colonial status of Puerto Rico and the exploitation it was suffering at the hand of North American business people. For the first time, I joined a political party opposed to the status quo. At the Cathedral, I also learned that Puerto Ricans, brown skinned, could not worship together with white Anglo-Saxons, although they were under the same roof. Each had its own rector, its own vestry, its own organist, its own secretary. I later learned, coming to Costa Rica, that this was typical of many other situations in Latin America, in which North Americans live in "compounds," segregated from the local population, not just as a matter of a "language problem," but because of attitudes of racism and superiority.
- 6) My first meeting in the House of Bishops took place

at Notre Dame, that controversial Special Convention. The plight of the Blacks and other ethnic groups brought to surface what I had personally experienced: racism and oppression in the household of God. How could anyone, with a sense of conscience and commitment to Christ, keep silent in the face of racism and oppression, not only in society, but in the Body of Christ! Our Church, through its missionary efforts throughout its history, had been ministering to Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Indians, and others, on the other side of the ocean. Here was that wounded, non-white neighbor on the other side of the street, yet we were acting as the Levite and the Priest in the parable of the Good Samaritan. It just did not make sense. Since then I have been trying to relate mission at home and abroad as one. We cannot be hypocrites in the name of Christ. He is the same at home and abroad.

---

J. Antonio Ramos: Episcopal Bishop of Costa Rica.

## Sober Second Thoughts . . .

The ethical questions raised by Bishop Ramos have long confronted the Christian community and press hard upon it today. We believe that the Gospel liberates humankind from all that fetters and debilitates, and that an unreserved outpouring of love and service is required of us on behalf of everyone, everywhere, in every way. This conviction, deeply held, can drive us to make strenuous efforts to reform or replace those structures of society which are often the cause of human misery. And this we will seek to do in addition to celebrating and proclaiming the Gospel by worship, word and personal service.

But it is no simple matter to make wise decisions about the complicated, perplexing and crucial issues of the day; and there is no easy ministry for those who engage in conflicts of power, which inevitably arise whenever systemic change is seriously sought. Partly for these reasons, and partly because "preaching the Gospel" by personal words and witness is itself so demanding, the Christian who is inspired to reform or replace ravaging structures is not likely to find strong support from the established and visible church. For it, the main thrust is usually like that urged by Pope Paul VI at the conclusion of the recent Synod of Bishops. In response to the Latin American Bishops who had pled for greater church

commitment to liberation movements, he said: "The totality of salvation is not to be confused with one or another aspect of liberation. . . Human advancement, social progress, are not to be excessively emphasized on a temporal level to the detriment of the essential meaning that evangelization has for the Church of Christ, the announcement of the good news".

This is a typical churchly response, affirmed by the Grahams and the Peales of the world. Rare exceptions occur: the World Council of Churches' support of controversial movements in Africa is one; the recent policy change in Church World Service may be another; and the short-lived General Convention Special Program, sponsored officially by the Episcopal Church, was a miraculous third while it lasted.

Bishop Ramos is chief pastor in a missionary diocese largely supported by the Episcopal Church. Is it realistic to expect that the missionary thrust of that church in Latin America will follow his lead and move toward a greater commitment to "the revolutionary process of liberation"? Not likely. For it is frequently true that the overseas missionary presence of the Episcopal Church, wherever it is, is even less committed, both theologically and practically, to Christian social change than the Episcopal Church in the States. Practical difficulties account for this to some extent, of course, for the Church's overseas personnel still includes American citizens, which rightly limits action. But in even the most indigenous overseas missions, the generalization holds true.

Our gallant brothers and sisters in Episcopal missions overseas often shame us by their faithfulness and zeal, by their loving, personal witness and service. But I find it difficult to imagine their responding wholeheartedly to Bishop Ramos' call to get involved and support the liberating process. In this respect, they are like the Episcopal Church at home.

**J. Brooke Mosley:** former deputy to the Presiding Bishop for overseas relations; currently assistant bishop, Diocese of Pennsylvania.

# Your Time Is Up!

by Henry Rightor

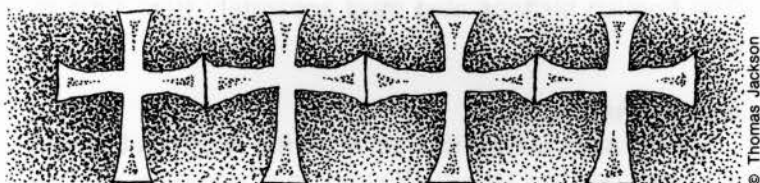
For ten minutes the black man had been speaking to all the members of General Convention, using the microphone he had taken away from the Presiding Bishop. Then, an official on the platform approached the speaker and said, "Your time is up." The black man replied, "*Your* time is up," and kept on speaking.

It was Labor Day weekend, 1969. The place was the Convention Hall on a University campus in South Bend, Indiana. The occasion was a plenary session on the second evening of the Special General Convention of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America.

A large group of black churchmen unexpectedly entered the hall during a scheduled program on "Ministry." Their guest, Muhammed Kenyatta, took the microphone from Bishop Hines, who was presiding. Bishop Hines made the best of a bad situation by asking all those who favored giving Mr. Kenyatta the floor for ten minutes to raise their hands. There was a scattering of raised hands and, without asking for the vote of those opposed, the Chairman announced that the vote had carried.

The purpose of this article is to consider the statement that was made by the Convention official and adopted as a reply by Mr. Kenyatta: "Your time is up." Who was right when each told the other that his time was up? Five years have passed, and it is now time to ask, "Whose time was up?" Could either voice have been the voice of true prophecy? And, if so, which voice spoke the truth?

I would suggest that both speakers may have been right. I mean by this that the outraged minorities and the outraged women and the outraged youth, all symbolized by Mr. Kenyatta, may never again be given any more time to speak to the Episcopal Church. Convention may not let them in again. I also mean that the Episcopal Church, symbolized by the Convention official, may never again be given any more time to minister to outraged minorities,



outraged women and outraged youth. They may have given up on the Church.

The South Bend Convention itself was an experiment. The Episcopal Church was experimenting in listening and ministering to groups that could never be formally represented in General Convention as it is presently structured. The South Bend experiment was undertaken because the preceding Convention, meeting in 1967 in Seattle, had been a sobering experience.

### **Listen to the World**

Just before the Seattle meeting the cities had been burning and the youth rebellions had been taking place. The Convention voted down any kind of proportional representation that might have given disaffected Episcopalians a formal voice and vote in its proceedings. While it was unwilling to undergo this kind of restructure, which would provide the Episcopal Church with representative government, the members of the Convention were troubled, nevertheless. So, in his valedictory as retiring President of Convention's House of Deputies at Seattle, Clifford P. Morehouse proclaimed that the Convention was "ready to listen to the world, hear what it says, and then to act."

"Work Groups" were set up as a substitute for representative government at the following South Bend Special Convention. The work groups were designed to provide places where bishops and deputies could all meet with Convention visitors and hear "other voices of people within the church — black, young, female, Indian, Latin" (*The Episcopalian*, October 1969, page 9). To insure the presence of "other voices," the Convention broke its precedent regarding the time and place of meeting. Instead of meeting during the busy season in the Fall, it met over the week of the long Labor Day weekend; and, instead of being located in Honolulu, or Miami Beach, or Seattle, it was held on the accessible, inexpensive Notre Dame University campus.

The result was that bishops and deputies heard and saw more of the visitors than they had bargained for. The visitors were not content with tidy work groups, and the black take-over of the plenary session the second evening was just a beginning. Later during the Convention a white grandmother from Michigan insisted on having the microphone in the House of Bishops and addressed that body. At another time a large group of young people, white and black, walked to the bottom of the gallery surrounding the House of Deputies which was in session; they stood silently with their backs to the Deputies to

protest the defeat of a resolution regarding "The Church as Sanctuary."

### **Consent of the Governed**

Looking back on the South Bend Convention, it is hard to understand the Convention's horrified reaction to the "other voices," which led to the hardening of an over-all, conservative position. We are citizens of a country that announced its birth by the Declaration of Independence. That document proclaimed that the authority of government lies in "the consent of the governed." This was not a platitude; it was a principle people died for in the American Revolution.

It should not have been surprising, therefore, that these "other voices" made themselves heard in an irregular way at South Bend. General Convention has consistently rejected any method of proportional representation that would permit Deputies to represent people in a "regular" way. The Convention is structured so that Deputies represent not people, but geographical entities, that is, dioceses. As a result, the Diocese of San Salvador with its 66 communicants has the same representation, the same number of votes in the House of Deputies, as the Diocese of Los Angeles with its 93,493 communicants.

By the same token it should not have been surprising to American citizens that 11 women were ordained to the priesthood in an irregular way last July in Philadelphia. Convention has consistently failed to approve opening the priesthood and episcopate to women. This has made certain bishops and their diocesan standing committees, who favor ordaining women to the priesthood, shy about exercising their autonomy and proceeding with such ordinations in a "regular" way. As a result, our priestly and episcopal orders are not representative of over half the members of the Body of Christ who are female.

It is not as though Anglican theology or tradition were unreceptive to representative government or representative orders. Staring at us across the Atlantic is the new General Synod of the Church of England. It is a comparatively small (500 plus) unicameral body, in which only diocesan bishops sit in the episcopal order, and clergy and laity are proportionally represented in their two orders according to the communicant strength of their dioceses. (The English bishops also meet separately from time to time.)

### **Across the Pacific**

Staring at us across the Pacific is the Anglican Diocese of Hong Kong and Macao. Women have been ordained to a



fruitful priesthood in that Diocese; and this has been without benefit of canonical or Prayer Book revision.

Why is it so difficult for the Deputies and Bishops in *our* Convention to countenance "other" voices and "other" ministries — that is, voices and ministries from their own? One explanation, that is both obvious and painful, is this: the power to control Convention is concentrated in only two persons and their principal appointees. They are the Presiding Officers of the two Houses and Chairpersons of the strategic Convention Committees, Joint Commissions, all of which they appoint under the existing Canons and the Rules of Order in both Houses.

Those who make up this small controlling group are committed, able, hard-working Christians. The fact remains, however, that they are also white, middle-aged, middle to upper-income males. To expect them to "think black" or "think young" or "think poor" or "think female" is expecting almost too much. The Vice President of the House of Deputies, Dr. Charles V. Willie, began to think both black *and* female this summer — and he resigned that office.

Until the composition of Convention is changed, it will be individuals, congregations and dioceses who must see to it that time is *not* up for the "other" voices and "other" ministries. Individuals, congregations and dioceses have enough autonomy to guarantee that time is given to those voices and ministries, NOW. Our calling to Christian mission and ministry demands it.

---

**Henry Rightor:** teaches Canon Law as well as Pastoral Care at Virginia Theological Seminary.

---

# How Long, O Lord?

by Arthur E. Walmsley

---

*Shower musing, the other morning:* There's life in the old church yet. (This premature euphoria enhanced somewhat by the mellow hues on the trees we glimpsed out the window, the tang in the Fall air, and, not least of all, upbeat returns from the Every Member Canvass).

*Shower meditation verse, imperfectly remembered but here quoted correctly:* "Today we are sure: the risen Christ is preparing his people to become at one and the same time a contemplative people, thirsting for God; a people of justice, living the struggle of men and peoples exploited; a people of communion, where the non-believer also finds a creative place."

*Sober reality crowding in:* Headline read minutes later at breakfast, "BISHOPS CHARGED FOR ORDAINING WOMEN. Greenwich — Shortly after the conclusion of the two-day Episcopal Church Executive Council meeting at Seabury House here, it was learned that formal charges have been received against the four bishops who . . ."

Oh hell," we said, the wife and I, "here are people on all sides who are looking for reality in the Church, and we exhume the Inquisition."

Clem Welsh said in his excellent College of Preachers newsletter recently that "the preacher agonizes over the attempt to relate the Word and the world, and his effectiveness depends on the openness with which he exposes to the listener that internal struggle."

By that token, the Episcopal Church has a fierce effectiveness. We have a splendid ingenuity at washing dirty linen in public. The agony's there, all right. But in a tragic, poignant way, the question ceases to be whether we will join the issue of sexism, or whether women will be ordained priests (they will be, after Minneapolis, or *have* been, depending on one's stance); rather it becomes whether the structures of the Episcopal Church are not a quaint anachronism in a word full of agonies.

And that's enough to make even a bright October day feel like late November.

---

## The Church's Untold Story

# Gerald Ford's Eccentric Conscience

by William Stringfellow

---

Americans have become accustomed to Presidential theology.

A succession of Presidents — good ones and bad ones, those wise and those foolish, some honest and some deceptive, the competent and — perchance — the insane — have belabored the notion that their occupancy in the White House renders them especially proximate to God. Presidents warn us of the lonely agony of their decisions, as if only God is privy to them, to reinforce an argument that Presidential decisions have frightful and ultimate consequence but are, fortunately, righteous in God's sight. Presidents pronounce their opinions and publish their policies under divine imprimatur. They are, they assure us, up to nothing less than the will of God.

Probably all rulers suffer such delusions. Doubtless many people consider it no more than rhetorical license: a

grandiose, but harmless, hyperbole which Presidents, like emperors and similar potentates, including pontiffs, indulge, making an appearance of humility out of arrogance.

I do not think that Presidential theology is innocuous, either politically or theologically. Politically, it is an effectual way of stifling criticism or of defaming opponents or of suppressing intelligent participation of citizens in government. Theologically, it is, too often, a means by which mistruth of the most pernicious sort is given currency and credibility.

The gross example, recently, of strange doctrine in Presidential theology is found in Gerald Ford's excuse for the pardon of his predecessor. The objective in the matter, as the President has candidly acknowledged, was political — "to firmly shut and seal this box" — Watergate — despite the prematurity of a pardon before indictment of Richard Nixon. The theological rationalization for this preemption of due process of law was said by the President to be his conscience which, he avowed, is governed by "the laws of God" and is, thus, "superior" to the Constitution of the United States. As if to solemnize his act, the President publicly disclosed it straightway he came from the altar of St. John's Episcopal Church, across Lafayette from the White House, where he had received Holy Communion. An aide to Ford further emphasized that the President calculated his announcement at an hour when millions of Americans were also going to church. "He figured," according to Philip Buchen, the President's counsel, "this was a very solemn moment that exemplified an act of high mercy. It was appropriate that it should occur on a day when people have thoughts like that."

---

*"Modes of production establish constraints with which humanity must come to terms, and the constraints of the industrial mode are peculiarly demanding. The rhythms of industrial production are not those of nature, nor are its necessary uniformities easily adapted to the varieties of human nature. While surely capable of being used for more humane purposes than we have seen hitherto, while no doubt capable of greater flexibility and much greater individual control, industrial production nonetheless confronts men with machines that embody "imperatives" if they are to be used at all, and these imperatives lead easily to the organization of work, of life, even of thought, in ways that accommodate men to machines rather than the much more difficult alternative."*

*from "AN INQUIRY INTO THE HUMAN PROSPECT" by Robert L. Heilbroner,  
W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.*

---



Save 33% on the cover price  
of a magazine of social conscience  
in a troubled world

## 18 issues of The Witness for \$7.20

Because you care about *all* the injustice in our troubled world . . . because you fear that churches are too conformed to the status quo to transform it—we invite you to *join us* in our search for clear vision, honest speech, and appropriate action! You may not always agree with what our writers have to say, but you'll always be stimulated by them. And you'll find *The Witness* a refreshing experience, for here is a search for truth and analysis in a troubled world. So fill out and mail the postage-free card. If at any time you wish to cancel your subscription, for any reason, just let us know and we'll refund your money for the unused portion. That's how sure we are that you'll be delighted with *The Witness*. This magazine of social conscience is written for people who care . . . people like you. Assure yourself of a full year of truth by subscribing to *The Witness* now!

**Complete and mail this  
postage-free card now**

### 18 issues of **THE WITNESS** for \$7.20 Save 33% on cover price

☐ Students and those  
over 65: \$5.40.

☐ Sustaining Subscription: \$25.00 yrly. To help  
*The Witness* continue to provide a forum for ideas.

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Bill me    ☐ Check enclosed. (Save us billing costs and receive an additional  
issue of *The Witness* at no extra charge. Same money-back guarantee!)

For special bulk (10 or more) subscription rate call *The Witness* collect 215 643-7067  
1214-18720

### 18 issues of **THE WITNESS** for \$7.20 Save 33% on cover price

☐ Students and those  
over 65: \$5.40.

☐ Sustaining Subscription: \$25.00 yrly. To help  
*The Witness* continue to provide a forum for ideas.

Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Bill me    ☐ Check enclosed. (Save us billing costs and receive an additional  
issue of *The Witness* at no extra charge. Same money-back guarantee!)

For special bulk (10 or more) subscription rate call *The Witness* collect 215 643-7067  
1214-18720

Get 18 issues of  
a magazine of social  
conscience for just  
**\$7.20**

Save **33%** on the cover  
price of **The Witness**

First Class  
Permit No. 22  
Ambler, Pa.

**Business Reply Mail**

No postage necessary if mailed in United States

Postage will be paid by

**THE WITNESS**

119 East Butler Avenue  
Ambler, Pennsylvania 19002

First Class  
Permit No. 22  
Ambler, Pa.

**Business Reply Mail**

No postage necessary if mailed in United States

Postage will be paid by

**THE WITNESS**

119 East Butler Avenue  
Ambler, Pennsylvania 19002

*The Witness* is published 18 times a year—18 issues of truth and analysis for people who care about the truth. We invite you to *join us* in our search for clear vision, honest speech, and appropriate action!

So instead of paying 60¢ a copy for each stimulating issue, use our special introductory offer to get it for just 40¢. And get it *automatically*, conveniently delivered to your home or office.

What's more, if for any reason you aren't delighted to receive *The Witness* on a regular basis, just tell us and we'll refund your money for the unused portion of your subscription. That's how sure we are you'll find *The Witness* a welcome experience, issue after issue.

If you haven't filled out the card on the other side of this page, go back and do it now. And welcome *The Witness* into your life. It's the magazine of social conscience in a troubled world. For people who care. People like you!

**Tear out, complete other  
side and mail!**



## Whose Conscience?

In political terms, the pardon dispensation seems to me quite comprehensible, even though its legal status is controversial. But the theologizing of it issues in a doctrine of conscience that is astonishing and bizarre. That is most obvious when one recalls that Jerald terHorst resigned as Presidential press secretary simultaneously with the utterance of the pardon on grounds of conscience. Does the conflict between the dictates of the Ford conscience and the insight of the terHorst conscience mean that God is incoherent? Or does this mean that, as between Presidents and press secretaries, the perception of "the laws of God" which assertedly "govern" conscience is different in a basic sense — one right, the other wrong, with no way to figure out which is which? A similar issue arises when the Nixon pardon is juxtaposed to the Ford conditional amnesty scheme for war resisters. How can the President insist upon the clarity and preeminence of his conscience at the same time that he denies the validity of the same grounds for acting to those who opposed the war and the draft because of their consciences?

One clue to the answers to such questions as these may be the curious remark of President Ford, when he announced the pardon, that he believes "with all my heart and mind and spirit that I, not as President but as a humble servant of God, will receive justice without mercy if I fail to show mercy." According to the pietism of Gerald Ford, it is fear of the wrath of God which prompts conscience: guilt defines conscience! That is what explains the radically idiosyncratic character of Ford's doctrine of conscience. And in that belief, which I take to be unambiguously sincere on Ford's part, lies the classic heresy of white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism.

## A Greek Idea

The truth, in contrast, is that the concept of conscience is very seldom invoked in the biblical witness. It originates as a Greek — not a Christian — idea. In one of the few places the term is even used in the New Testament (it is not used at all in the Old Testament), Paul refers to it in his apologetic passages in First Corinthians concerning how not to offend the consciences of those who are not Christians. In Romans, Paul identifies conscience not as an equation for the will of God but, on the contrary, as the "conflicting thoughts" and as "the secrets of men" which will be judged by Christ Jesus. The most notable mention of conscience in the Bible occurs in the First Epistle of Peter where the meaning of baptism, as the sacrament of

the new and mature humanity of persons in Christ, is explicated. There conscience has no eccentric connotations, as it did for the Greeks and as it evidently does for Gerald Ford, but is an expression of the commonality of the baptized with the whole of humanity. There conscience does not mean a private, unilateral, self-serving, morally superior conclusion, but, rather, the freedom to transcend self for the sake of human life of one who is forgiven. In the biblical faith, conscience is not apprehension about God's wrath, but living in the trustworthiness of the judgment of God.

If Americans must hear the rhetoric of Presidential theology while suffering the political consequences of the pardon of Mr. Nixon, then President Ford is consigned to endure the political unpopularity of his decision with the advantage of conscience.

---

William Stringfellow: author, social critic, attorney and theologian.

# Network Reports

## Roman Catholic Theologians Support Episcopal Women

One hundred and twelve Roman Catholic theologians and religious writers have signed a statement of support for the 11 women ordained to the priesthood on July 29 in Philadelphia.

The statement (*see October 13 issue*) expresses concurrence with the principle of women in the priesthood and says, "We are sensitive to the pain which has been suffered by these women and many others like them who have found their desire to respond to the call to the Christian ministry rebuffed by the official Churches."

The statement also asks the Roman Catholic Church to accept priesthood for women in the communion.

## Lawyers Meet To Discuss Eleven Women's Defense

A group of lawyers convened by William Stringfellow met on October 30 in New York City to review the legal defense of the 11 ordained women priests.

The lawyers discussed the possibility of civil suits which might be brought under various state non-discrimination statutes. "There's no great keenness to go into secular courts," Stringfellow said. "On the other

hand, lawyers have a responsibility to advise their clients about all possible ways of safeguarding their rights if the ecclesiastical courts are not sufficient."

Other methods of defense under debate were challenges to the tax-exempt status of the Church as well as to the General Convention's negative action on the ordination of women. The latter would involve the "one man, one vote" doctrine.

Lawyers attending the meeting were: Henry Rightor, Jr. Alexandria, Va.; Emmelyn Logan-Baldwin, Rochester, N.Y.; Arnold B. Kassabian, Annandale, Va.; Greer Lockhart, Minneapolis, Minn.; Frank Patton, New York City; Lillian Altree, Charlottesville, N.C.; Ellen Dressel-huis, Minneapolis; Robert Kendall, Philadelphia, Pa.; Henry Franzoni, Bloomfield, N.J.; Constance E. Cook, Ithaca, N.Y.; and John Ballard, Philadelphia.

Readers of *The Witness* are invited to submit reports on a wide variety of subjects and events looked at from many perspectives. Send reports to *The Witness/Network Reports*, 17187 Wildemere, Detroit, Michigan 48221.

The Episcopal Church Publishing Company  
P.O. Box 359  
Ambler, Pennsylvania 19002  
Address Correction Requested

BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE

**PAID**

Lima, Ohio 45802  
Permit No. 176